

**STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,  
CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,  
FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL  
RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1885 TO ESTABLISH THE SANTA CRUZ  
VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE STATE OF ARIZONA, AND FOR  
OTHER PURPOSES.**

**JULY 12, 2007**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 1885, a bill to establish the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area in the State of Arizona.

The Department recommends that the committee defer action on Santa Cruz Valley NHA and all other proposed heritage area designations until program legislation is enacted that establishes guidelines and a process for the designation of national heritage areas. Last year, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal to establish guidelines and a process for designation. Bills were introduced in the 109th Congress (S. 243, H.R. 760 and H.R. 6287) that incorporated the majority of the provisions of the Administration's proposal, and S. 243 passed the Senate. During the 110th Congress, a similar heritage area program bill, S. 278, has been introduced, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue.

With 37 national heritage areas designated across 27 states, and more heritage area proposals in the legislative pipeline, the Administration believes it is critical at this juncture for Congress to enact national heritage area program legislation. This legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful

planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas. Program legislation also would clarify the expectation that heritage areas would work toward self-sufficiency by outlining the necessary steps, including appropriate planning, to achieve that shared goal.

H.R.1885 would establish the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area (NHA) in southern Arizona, managed by the Santa Cruz Valley Heritage Alliance Inc. The bill requires the Alliance to develop a management plan within 3 years of the date funds are available for approval by the Secretary. The National Park Service (NPS) and other federal agencies working within the Heritage Area are encouraged to consider the values of the area when planning and conducting activities. H.R. 1885 would prohibit the Heritage Area from using federal funds to acquire any real property and would authorize \$10 million to carry out the provisions of the bill, with no more than \$1 million authorized in any fiscal year. H.R. 1885 also includes a sunset clause, terminating federal assistance after 15 years.

The proposed Santa Cruz Valley NHA encompasses approximately 3,300 square miles of the upper and middle Santa Cruz River watershed and the upper Sonoran Desert. It includes two units of the National Park System, Tumacacori National Historical Park which preserves a Spanish Colonial Mission, and Saguaro National Park which protects a diverse and picturesque area of the Sonoran Desert. The Juan Baptista de Anza National Historic Trail also crosses the heritage area's boundary.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages approximately 64,000 acres of land within the proposed Heritage Area. The preponderance of that land (nearly 50,000 acres) lies within the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area established by Public Law 106-538. The remainder of the BLM-managed land consists of scattered parcels.

The U.S. Forest Service manages approximately 645,000 acres of land within the proposed NHA, comprising about one-third of the Coronado National Forest. Elevations there range from 3,000 feet to 9,500 feet in eight widely scattered mountain ranges or “sky islands” that rise dramatically from the desert floor, supporting plant communities as biologically diverse as those encountered on a trip from Mexico to Canada. All or portions of four wilderness areas managed by the Coronado National Forest occur in the proposed NHA.

Among the many multiple-uses existing on both BLM and Forest Service lands are recreation, grazing, energy and other rights-of-way, and hardrock mining.

The area is home to abundant wildlife, including, spadefoot toads, which live most of their lives underground, a variety of reptiles, 200 migratory bird species, 100 species of butterflies, coyotes, javalinas, deer, mountain lion, Mexican grey wolf, and an occasional jaguar visiting from Mexico.

The Santa Cruz Valley also boasts a rich cultural heritage. In addition to Tumacacori, the area includes other 18<sup>th</sup> century Spanish missions and Spanish cultural traditions, including language, ranching, and farming practices, which still play a prominent role in the area’s identity. The

Tohono O’odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe also call the area home. Native Americans have inhabited the area since 11,000 B.C. and their cultural achievements are reflected in agricultural canals, pottery, and villages, the remains of which are still found in the valley.

The area also includes several National Historic Landmarks, including the Desert Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution, a distinguished center for the study of North American desert ecology; the Missile Site 8 National Historic Landmark, which is the last remaining example of a Titan II ICBM launch and control center associated with the Cold War; and San Xavier Del Bac, a fine example of Spanish Colonial mission church.

In addition to two units of the National Park System, other recreational opportunities found in the Santa Cruz Valley include four state parks, Coronado National Forest and BLM lands, and county parks. Of the 2.1 million acres within the proposed boundary, 71% is public, managed by various State, federal, and county entities.

The proposal to create a national heritage area enjoys strong grassroots support. The effort to achieve a heritage area was commenced in 2003 by the Center for Desert Archaeology which has completed a feasibility study that assesses the proposal against criteria for assessing national Heritage Area designations suggested by the National Park Service. That feasibility study determined that the area is appropriate for designation.

In addition to the cultural, natural and historical resources, the feasibility study considered the integrity of the resources, the involvement of local residents and land owners, businesses, non-

profits, and governments in developing a conceptual financial plan for the heritage area, the willingness of affected parties to work in partnership to develop the heritage area, whether the proposal is consistent with the area's economic activity, whether the proposed boundary enjoys public support, and a whether plan exists for a management entity to help coordinate development of the heritage area.

State and federal land management agencies with operations within Santa Cruz Valley have endorsed the NHA and stated their willingness to work collaboratively with the management entity. The effort has also drawn the support of Pima and Santa Cruz counties and all other local governments, including Tucson, Nogales, Marana, Oro Valley and Sahuarita, and was the subject of more than 60 meetings with local leaders, tribal members, and various stakeholder groups.

If the committee chooses to move forward with this bill, the Department would recommend that the bill be amended to include an additional requirement for an evaluation to be conducted by the Secretary, three years prior to the cessation of federal funding under this act. The evaluation would examine the accomplishments of the heritage area in meeting the goals of the management plan; analyze the leveraging and impact of investments to the heritage area; identify the critical components of the management structure and sustainability of the heritage area; and recommend what future role, if any, the National Park Service should have with respect to the heritage area.

In addition, we would like to work with the Subcommittee to develop amendments to ensure that the management planning process is coordinated with the affected federal agencies, and Tribal, State, and local governments, that revisions to the management plan be approved by the

Secretary, that provisions regarding disapproval of the management plan be added, and that provisions relating to management and use of federal lands and private property rights be clarified. In Section 7 of the bill there also appears to be duplicate language regarding the criteria for approval of the management plan which may need to be revised. These amendments would make H.R. 1885 consistent with other, similar, national heritage area establishment bills.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.